

Message Text

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C O N F I D E N T I A L LISBON 3936

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SUBJ: SOARES SUGGESTIONS FOR U.S. ASSISTANCE

BEGIN SUMMARY. SOCIALIST LEADER SOARES HAS SUGGESTED THAT THE U.S. HELP HIS PARTY IN THE CURRENT CRISIS BY: A LETTER FROM PRESIDENT FORD TO COSTA GOMES EXPRESSING CONCERN; A DISCREET SHOW OF NAVAL PRESENCE BY U.S. OR NATO NAVAL UNITS; A DIRECT U.S. APPROACH TO THE USSR. SOARES IS FIRMLY CONVINCED THAT ANY ATTEMPTED ACTION NOW BY PORTUGUESE RIGHTISTS OR BY SPINOLA WOULD DOOM THE SOCIALIST PARTY. END SUMMARY

1. MARIO SOARES'S CHIEF OF CABINET, SA MACHADO, CALLED ON DCM OKUN 1:00 A.M. JULY 12 AT OKUN'S HOME TO RELAY TO US SOARES'S SUGGESTIONS ON POSSIBLE U.S. ASSISTANCE TO THE SOCIALISTS. (DCM HAD EARLIER PASSED MESSAGE TO SOARES THAT AMBASSADOR WANTED TO BE SUPPORTIVE; THAT AMBASSADOR LEFT IT TO HIS JUDGMENT WHETHER HIS PERSONAL INVOLVEMENT WOULD BE USEFUL; BUT THAT AMBASSADOR WAS PREPARED TO BE VISIBLY INVOLVED, IF ONLY SYMBOLICALLY, PROVIDED THAT SOARES THOUGHT IT WOULD HELP HIM. SOARES APPRECIATED THIS; SAID FOR TIME BEING WE SHOULD AVOID HIGHLY VISIBLE CONTACTS; BUT WE SHOULD REMAIN IN CLOSEST TOUCH. HENCE THE 1:00 A.M. MEETING.)

2. SA MACHADO SAID THERE WERE THREE THINGS SOARES THOUGHT WOULD HELP AT PRESENT JUNCTURE. SA MACHADO, HIMSELF A SENIOR PORTUGUESE FSO, STRESSED THAT SOARES PUT THESE FORTH AS IDEAS, FOR US TO CONSIDER OR REJECT AS WE SEE FIT. SOARES WANTS US NOT TO FEEL PRESSURED BY HIM -- HE VIEWS THESE IDEAS AS THINKING TOGETHER
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WITH US.

(A) -- A LETTER FROM PRESIDENT FORD TO PRESIDENT COSTA GOMES, EXPRESSING SYMPATHY FOR CG PERSONALLY, BUT CONCERN OVER DEVELOPMENTS IN PORTUGAL. SOARES REASONS THAT, SINCE IT WAS CG WHO SAVED VASCO GONCALVES'S SKIN IN THE REVOLUTIONARY COUNCIL (LISBON 3935), A GENTLE REMINDER THAT WE'RE WATCHING MIGHT MAKE CG LESS INDULGENT NEXT TIME AROUND.

(B) -- A DISCREET DEMONSTRATION OF THE PRESENCE OF U.S. NAVAL UNITS, PREFERABLY TOGETHER WITH SOME NAVAL UNITS FROM OTHER NATO COUNTRIES. THIS COULD TAKE THE FORM OF A PORT CALL AT LISBON, OR MANEUVERS SUITABLY NEAR THE PORTUGUESE COAST. SA MACHADO SAID THAT SOARES VIEWS MOST THE AFM LEADERS AS "CHILDREN," AND THAT THEY ARE HIGHLY IMPRESSIONABLE.

(C) -- A DIRECT U.S. APPROACH TO THE USSR, POINTING OUT THAT SOVIET-ORCHESTRATED, PCP MACHINATIONS IN PORTUGAL THREATEN THE CSCE AND PERHAPS US-SOVIET DETENTE. SOARES REALIZES THIS IS VERY DIFFICULT FOR US, BUT HE ALSO THINKS IT WOULD PROBABLY BE THE MOST EFFECTIVE THING WE COULD DO.

3. COMMENT: MY OWN VIEW IS THAT WE SHOULD CONTINUE TO WORK IN CLOSE CONCERT WITH THE EUROPEANS, BUT WE SHOULD NOT GIVE THEM A TOTAL VETO OVER POSSIBLE U.S. ACTIONS VIA THEIR PASSIVITY OR DIS-UNITY. RE SOARES'S THREE PROPOSALS, MY JUDGEMENT IS: (B) WOULD BE HARMFUL, SINCE IT WOULD FEED AFM PARANOIA IN A MANNER INIMICAL TO OUR INTERESTS AND GIVE THE AFM LEFTISTS AN EXCUSE TO CALL FOR UNITY AGAINST THE COMMON ENEMY. I HAVE NO VIEWS ON (C) SINCE WE ARE NOT FULLY ACQUAINTED WITH OUR CURRENT NEGOTIATING POSTURE WITH SOVIETS. (A) HAS SOME POSSIBILITIES, ALTHOUGH I SEE NO REASON FOR PRESIDENT FORD TO LAY HIS PRESTIGE ON THE LINE. BUT A STRAIGHT DEMARCHE TO COSTA GOMES MIGHT HAVE SOME VALUE, PARTICULARLY IF WE CAN HINT TO HIM IN AN INDIRECT WAY THAT WE KNOW HE SAVED VASCO GONCALVES. I RECOGNIZE WE WILL GET STANDARD LINE FROM COSTA GOMES, I.E. WE DIDN'T HELP SOON ENOUGH AND OUR PRESS CONTINUES TO DISTORT SITUATION. BUT WE MAY STILL BE ABLE TO GET ACROSS THE MESSAGE THAT AFM AND CG ARE PARTING COMPANY WITH THE PROFESSED GOALS OF THE REVOLUTION, AND THAT THIS CANNOT BUT HAVE AN ADVERSE REACTION IN THE US (AND BY IMPLICATION ON SUPPORT HE PERSONNALLY COULD EXPECT). DANGER, OF COURSE, IS THAT COSTA GOMES HAS ALREADY WRITTEN US OFF, AND DECIDED (AN AN EXPERT IN POLITICAL SURVIVAL) TO THROW IN HIS LOT WITH VASCO GONCALVES, OR AT THE VERY LEAST NOT TO ALLOW MELO

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ANTUNES TO TAKE VASCO ON FRONTALLY.

4. IT WOULD OBVIOUSLY BE BETTER IF WE COULD GET EUROPEANS TO SAY THIS TO COSTA GOMES FIRST, BUT REACTION OF MY GERMAN AND BRITISH COLLEAGUES (SEE SEPTTEL) IS NOT ENCOURAGING. PERHAPS THEIR FOREIGN OFFICES WOULD BE MORE RECEPTIVE SINCE THEY ARE INCLINED (ERRONEOUSLY IN MY JUDGEMENT) TO ASSESS PORTUGAL'S POLITICAL FUTURE ALMOST ENTIRELY IN TERMS OF WHAT IS HAPPENING

TO SOARES, AND IF EVER THERE WAS A TIME WHEN SOCIALISTS NEEDED
HELP IT IS NOW.

5. A FINAL NOTE. SA MACHADO VOLUNTEERED TO OKUN SOARES'S VERY
STRONG BELIEF THAT THE WORST POSSIBLE THING THAT COULD HAPPEN
NOW WOULD BE FOR THE EXTREME RIGHT, INCLUDING SPINOLA, TO LAUNCH
ANOTHER COUNTER-COUP A LA MARCH 11. IN REITERATING THIS POINT
TO US, AND HE ELABORATED ON IT AT LENGTH, SA MACHADO MADE CLEAR
THAT THE SOCIALISTS HOPE WE WILL USE WHATEVER INFLUENCE WE HAVE
TO ENSURE THAT ANOTHER RIGHTIST ADVENTURE DOES NOT OCCUR. IF
IT DOES, SOARES BELIEVES IT WILL FINISH OFF THE SOCIALISTS.
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